

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1 to 4 and add claims 5 to 16:

Claims 1 to 4.(canceled)

5.(new) An absorbent article comprising

a liquid permeable front sheet;

a liquid impermeable back sheet; and

a rectangular or nearly rectangular shaped flat absorbent core interposed between said liquid permeable front sheet and said liquid impermeable back sheet;

wherein said flat absorbent core has a periphery, is divided into at least four parts by at least two intersecting passages, and said at least two intersecting passages extend between said front sheet and said back sheet;

wherein said at least two intersecting passages each traverses a point within a circle with a radius of 25 mm to the periphery of the absorbent core, said circle having a center coinciding with a center of said flat absorbent core; and

wherein said front sheet, said back sheet, and said parts of said flat absorbent core are formed so that said at least two intersecting passages each have a width of from 2 to 6 mm and a depth equal to a thickness of said flat absorbent core so that a depression is not observable along any of said at least two intersecting passages on the front sheet or the back sheet.

6.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 5, wherein said flat absorbent core is divided into eight parts by four intersecting passages extending between said front sheet and said back sheet.

7.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 6, wherein said point traversed by said four intersecting passages is located at said center of said circle.

8.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 6, wherein said flat absorbent core comprises a plurality of alternating layers and said alternating layers comprise NBSK fiber and thermally bonded fiber layers and super absorbent polymer layers.

9.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 5, consisting of a disposable diaper.

10.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 5, consisting of a sanitary napkin.

11.(new) An absorbent article comprising

a liquid permeable front sheet;

a liquid impermeable back sheet; and

a rectangular or nearly rectangular shaped flat absorbent core interposed between said liquid permeable front sheet and said liquid impermeable back

sheet;

wherein said flat absorbent core has a periphery, is divided into at least three parts by at least two through-going passages, and said at least two through-going passages extend between said front sheet and said back sheet to the periphery of the absorbent core;

wherein said at least two through-going passages each passes through or traverses a circle with a radius of 25 mm, said circle having a center coinciding with a center of said flat absorbent core; and

wherein said front sheet, said back sheet, and said parts of said flat absorbent core are formed so that said at least two through-going passages each have a width of from 2 to 6 mm and a depth equal to a thickness of said flat absorbent core so that a depression is not observable along any of said at least two intersecting passages on the front sheet or the back sheet.

12.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 11, wherein said absorbent core is provided with three through-going passages, which each extend from one side of the absorbent core through said circle of radius 25 mm to another opposite side of said absorbent core and which divide said absorbent core into four parts.

13.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 11, wherein said flat absorbent core comprises a plurality of alternating layers and said alternating layers comprise NBSK fiber and thermally bonded fiber layers and super

absorbent polymer layers.

14.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 13, having an absorption speed of between 8 and 20 seconds when 200 ml of an 0.9 weight percent physiological saline solution is poured onto the absorbent article at a flow rate of 14 ml/sec from a vertically oriented injection pipe arranged above said center of said circle.

15.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 11, consisting of a disposable diaper.

16.(new) The absorbent article as defined in claim 11, consisting of a sanitary napkin.